

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, May 9, 1917, with transcript

Letter from Mrs. Alexander Graham Bell to Dr. Alexander Graham Bell. Washington, D. C. May 9, 1917. Dearest Alec:

If you thought your family pessimistic before I wonder what you would say now.

Bert is very much excited, very much alarmed, says that after these weeks since the declaration of a state of war nothing has been done, what little was started is held up, and meantime Hoover the Belgian Food Relief man who has just returned a day or two ago from England says she has food for just five weeks more. Possibly by stretching she could hold out six weeks, but after that is starvation. That all the telegrams from Amsterdam speaking of the shortage of food in Germany emanate from Germany itself with the object of throwing us off the scent and making us less urgent in the pursuit of the war. They are it is true extremely sparing in the use of food, but that is their source of strength, they are husbanding their forces and can hold out indefinitely. The contracts were signed for the wooden ships, but are suddenly being held up, the head of the shipping board wants to look them over at his leisure, at his leisure when English food supplies are being sunk at the rate this month of one million tons. The Liberty Loan is not going as it should and it is largely the Govt's fault as it has not advertized it properly. Bankers went on from New York to offer their services and were turned down, and the new Asst. Sec. of the Treasury just appointed to take charge of the bonds is the very man who cheated David and many others out of their money in the Tel. Harmonicum scandal. He cleared his fortune all right and then the company 2 collapsed. Lansing and Lane are in bed (bad?) with the President, nothing is being done by the War Department and Redfield and Burleson are dangerous men to have in power now. The Senate and Congress is waking up to the danger, but the President has not and there is a great deal of opposition to him growing. Kahn the

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German-born Republican, who won the conscription bill in the House which was the President's own measure and which was repudiated by the Government Leader in the House has never been thanked by the President, nor have any other Republicans received any acknowledgement for the stand they took in forgetting all partisanship.

Bert thinks there should be a coalition cabinet like the English and French with Charles E. Hughes as one of the officers. There is the utmost need for a publicity campaign in Russia to let the Russians know of the power and influence of the United States, but nothing so far has been done. All the German Secret Service men whom we know did so much harm are still here, and Bert suspects that one of them has even got hold of Mr. Taft because he is being urged to print the address he made on the Jews before the Geographic, and Bert says nothing would be better calculated to inflame the Russians than any reference to Jews. However it will not be printed because Bert bought it, and Taft has no right in it and Bert will not release it.

I saw Charlie today, he called me back when I was at the bank to say Miss Lacey has been there to ask for her money, but he had referred her to me and I have not yet heard from her. I asked him if we should sell Am. Tel. and Tel. to buy Liberty bonds, but 3 shrugged his shoulders and said the market was way down. Telephone selling for only \$1.16 as against 1.24 day before yesterday. Mr. Carty told me that there was great danger of the Government's taking over the Telephone Company as a war measure, he dreaded it very much for patriotic reasons as well as every other, because no one could manage it so efficiently as the people who had been trained in its management.

I feel that we must retrench and I want you to let Mr. Clime go as soon as he has finished your Hyde and other books. There will be no hardship for him because there is great demand for just such men as he in the Govt. Service now. Bert says almost all employers are finding it hard to keep their employees on that account. He has lost 18 already. Please consider this seriously. Charlie fears we may lose almost half our income and Mr. Tyler says from ten to twenty-five per cent. Last year we spent more than our income, and by

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dropping Mr. Clime we would save \$1200.00 and I do not think he is very important to you once your Hyde and other books are through, and he told me the work was practically done. It seems to me we want to concentrate in what is immediately before us, the absolute necessity of stopping the submarines and raising food. Please do realize that the necessity of finding some means to do that is supreme. It is denied that any means has been found. This may of course be to throw dust, but there is always the possibility. I cannot tell you how excited Bert was last night as he brought fact after fact up. After all the conscription law has not become law yet, why? Excuses, explanations are the order of the day, meantime nothing is done.

4

Always Mr. Balfour's face is before me with its beautiful patient smile. Christ's might have looked like that from the Cross. And this morning I met two French officers, and they too have something of that same expression.

I am so pleased that you cared enough to go out at 2 A. M. to make that experiment and so disappointed that it came to nothing next day. Can't you try out telephonic hearing now. Something was said about having telephones at either side of a boat like ears and being able to tell the direction of sounds very accurately.

I have written Mr. Balfour suggesting a meeting between one of his staff and Bert in behalf of publicity, and have had a reply to the effect that he would be very glad to have a meeting arranged between him and Mr. Geoffrey Butler.

Did I tell you that the parents have taken the pay schools off my shoulders, that too will save us something next year. Now I must try and help the free one.

I wish you were here and yet I don't if you are going on with your experiments. Only don't try any more ice water ones yourself. I Love you and love you.

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Mabel. Tell Casey all I have said about things. It is at all events very sure that we need to exert ourselves. Of course if England yields and perforce makes peace Canada will be out of the strife and can look quietly on while we are getting our taste of German Kultur.